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ABSTRACT

This report describes an experimental day care program in Amsterdam, begun in 1969 to investigate how a day care center could contribute towards the favorable development of children under four from unskilled and semiskilled families. Because it is only recently that day care for children under four has been used to any extent, this is the first project in the Netherlands that is collecting psychometric data on young children which will form the basis for further research. Included in the report is information concerning: (1) the Dutch educational system; (2) objectives, organization, and evaluation (instruments and testing schedules) of the project; (3) the child care workers, with comments on current and future selection and training techniques; (4) the children's daily schedule and the special attention given to problem children; (5) parents' involvement in the program, with special comment on the development of a room in which parents can meet informally with each other and the social worker; and (6) six major limitations on evaluating the project statistically. (ED)

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PROEFKRECHE '70

A DAY CARE CENTER FOR VERY YOUNG CHILDREN
IN AMSTERDAM (written summer 1974)

PS007766

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1. SOCIAL SECURITY AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE NETHERLANDS

1.1 Social Security

There is a long history of Dutch social security; provisions on an overall national basis go back to the turn of the century. The principle is now established that adequate and comprehensive legal social security provisions must be maintained to cover the entire population, or at least all residents. The history, organization, financing and operations of the component schemes are quite complex. But briefly we can state that adequate security is provided against incapacity for work, children and sickness expenses, unemployment and old age retirement, and for widows and orphans.

In The Netherlands the term "deprived" can only apply to people with poor housing, little education and low wages. However, their material wealth is often superior to that of most deprived groups in, for instance, the United States.

1.2 Educational System

In The Netherlands school attendance now is compulsory for children aged from 6 to 15. All public education for children in this age group is basically free.

Primary education takes 6 years, after which the child may choose from various different types of secondary education, which take 3 to 6 years.

All education for children aged 16 and older is not free, but lower income groups may obtain grants, so that - theoretically speaking - no one need to be excluded from higher education for financial reasons.

1.3 Pre-school System

Children aged 4 to 6 years may attend kindergartens. These facilities are widely used; about 84% of all Dutch 4 year olds and about 96% of all 5 year olds attend a kindergarten. Parents are required to pay small fee (Dfl. 40 per year, about \$ 16) and are free in their choice of a kindergarten (Catholic, Protestant or no specific church affiliation).

The Ministry of Education subsidizes all Dutch kindergartens even private ones, if they meet certain requirements such as minimum entrance age, teacher training, pupil-teacher ratio, content and duration of the daily schedule, sanitary and hygienic conditions in the building, etc. In 1971 the average number of pupils in each class was 30. Generally the kindergartens follow loosely structured programmes which exhibit the influence of Froebel, Montessori and Dutch educationalists. On a smaller scale experiments with compensatory programmes for lower-class children have been conducted.

1.4 History of Day Care

At the beginning of this century there were various day-care centers in the larger cities, attended, in particular, by children from lower-class families. Until the sixties, it was generally thought that a child should stay at home with his mother until the age of 4 and, consequently, the number of day-care centers remained limited. Moreover, there were less working mothers in the Netherlands than in other West European countries. It is estimated that no more than 20% of the mothers with a child or children under five have a paid job outside the home. However, during the last few years there has been a marked increase in the number of morning day-care centers for 2 - 4 year olds, in which the mothers take turns in assisting the child-care worker. Also, the traditional day-care centers are now being attended increasingly by children from middle-class and upper-class families.

Most morning day-care centers and regular day-care centers (about 2000 facilities) have united in a co-ordinating organization, called: Werkgemeenschap Kindercentra Nederland - W.K.N. The Government is drafting a set of legal requirements for day-care of children up to 4 years old; at present, each municipality has its own policy, regulations and subsidies. Day-care workers do not yet require a specific training in the Netherlands. There are approximately 10 different types of secondary education which have some relation to training on child-care.

The salaries and status of child-care workers are low as compared with those of kindergarten teachers.

At present, various factors are subject to discussion, such as the desirability of day-care centers, the possibility of making this type of "education" free of charge, the standards that should apply to day-care in general, the introduction of special day-care for special children, etc.

2. OBJECTIVES, ORGANIZATION AND EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

2.1 Inception and Objectives

The project Proefkrecht'70 was started in 1969 at the request of the Dutch Ministry of Cultural and Social Work to investigate how a day-care center could contribute towards the favorable development of children under 4 from unskilled or semi-skilled families.

Although the majority of the children in the project were to come from this background, it was considered desirable to include a smaller group of children whose parents had at least 12 years of schooling, in order to compare the development of both groups.

The project also aims to design, evaluate and propagate programmes and activities suitable for children of this age group. Besides this, it aims to contribute towards the improvement of the quality of Dutch day-care in general.

2.2 Accommodation, Location, Children and Staff

2.2.1 Accommodation, Location

The day-care center is established in a renovated office building on one of the main roads in Amsterdam. It is situated near one of the working-class quarters of the city and it takes about 10 minutes for the parents to bring their children to the center.

Two floors are available for the children, each divided into two rooms separated by a door. The first floor is about 30 square metres and the second about 40 square metres. The adjoining observation rooms are equipped with one-way screens and headphones which can be used for listening in to the children. The children can also play in the corridors and in the garden behind the building. The building contains a reception room for the administration, a testing room, a room for the research staff, a kitchen and a room for the children's parents, which also holds a "toy-library".

2.2.2 Children

The maximum capacity of the center is 40 children, half of whom attend whole days and half only during the morning. Most children are brought between 8.00 and 9.00 hours. Morning-children are collected between 12.00 and 13.00 hours; day-children between 16.00 and 17.30 hours. About 75% of the children between 16.00 and 17.30 hours. About 75% of the children are of unskilled parents. Although a child may enter the project after his first birthday, most children start attending when they are two years old. The minimum length of participation in the project is 9 months; the maximum is 3 years. All the children leave the project when they are four years old, to attend one of the kindergartens in Amsterdam. The children are grouped according to age: there are two groups of children from about 1.0 to about 2.6 years and four groups of older children. The former groups "juniors" each consist of 4 (maximum 5) children and the latter groups "seniors" each consists of 7 children. Groups intermingle quite often during the day. Every group has its own child-care worker.

2.2.3 Staff

The people on charge of the groups are called "kinderverzorgsters" for which "child-care workers" is the best translation. Neither "nurse" nor "teacher" would be an adequate term, since the job entails more teaching than that of a nurse and more nursing than that of a teacher. There is a total of 8 child-care workers. Their schooling varies from 9 to 10 years. Ages range from 22 to 30 years. The day-care center is headed by Truus van der Lem, a psychologist. Two other half-time psychologists work on the project, who with 4 part-time research assistants are responsible for the collection of research data. The research assistants are students of the Psychology Faculty at the two Universities of Amsterdam.

Another part-time co-worker (who is a Pedagogy-student) provides play therapy with problem children (see section 4.2). There are two part-time social workers, one of whom makes the first contacts with the parents and, after the child's admission, provides individual help in the problems the parents may have concerning their child. The other part-time social worker is working with the parents in group activities (see section 5). Also working at the project are two part-time secretaries, a kitchen supervisor and various trainees. The project was initiated by Dolf Kohnstamm.

2.3 Evaluation

2.3.1 Instruments

The following tests are used for measuring general and cognitive development: the Bayley developmental scale, the Stutsman Merrill-Palmer scale, the Stanford-Binet intelligence scale and the AKIT for ages 4 - 6 years.

Only the AKIT has standardized norms for Dutch children. Two Dutch tests are used to measure the children's vocabulary, one of which has been standardized on a large sample of the population of Utrecht. All tests are administered under standardized conditions in the presence of the child's mother or father. Standardized interviews are held with the parents (every 6 months) and with the kindergarten teachers of the schools attended by the children after they have left the project. Finally, standard progress reports are gathered from regular meetings at which individual children are discussed.

2.3.2 Testing Scheme

Children may join the project at different ages. Those joining ages between 1.0 (one year) and 1.6 (one year six months) are tested for the first time with the Bayley scale. However, the majority begin with the Stutsman, as most children join the project at an age too high for the Bayley.

The testing scheme for a child joining at 1.0 is as follows:

approximate age	instrument
1.2	Bayley
2.2	Statsman
2.3	Vocabulary test (PKW)
3.0	Statsman
3.1	Vocabulary test (PKW)
3.10	Stanford Binet
3.11	Vocabulary test (UTANT)

4.11	Intelligence scale (AKIT)
4.11	Vocabulary test (UTANT)
5.11	Intelligence scale (AKIT)
	Stanford Binet
	Vocabulary test (UTANT)

Tests below the dotted line are administered when the children are in kindergarten

2.3.3 Group of Children for Comparison

Since children could not be assigned to experimental and control groups in a random manner, the research design is not a true experimental one. However, a comparison group was formed, consisting of children not attending any kind of day care center but raised exclusively at home. The comparison group was chosen from about 400 families, obtained mostly via municipal medical services for babies and infants.

By comparing these children with the project group for a number of factors (parent's education and occupation, sex, age, and order of birth) the comparison group was selected consisting of children similar to those of the project group.

All comparison children are tested on the same basis, at about the same ages, in the presence of the mother or father.

When the project children enter kindergarten (i.e. leave the day-care center), two new comparison children are selected from the class the child joins. The children in kindergarten (both ex-project-children and the comparison children) are tested in school.

3. THE CHILD-CARE WORKERS

3.1 Education and background

As described in section 2.2.2 there are day-children and morning-children. For the day-children there are 5 child-care workers: one attends a full week of 40 hours, two attend 30 hours a week and two attend 20 hours a week. For the morning-children there are three part-time child-care workers, attending 30 hours a week.

All of our child-care workers have had a training directed at care of children in institutions. The number of years of experience in this particular kind of day-care work varies from 0 to 14 years.

3.2 Personal and vocational development in the project

Working with children in our center implies that one must have the intention and the capacity:

- to develop a warm and affectionate relationship with children
- to recognize different needs and feelings of the children and react adequately to these needs and feelings
- to present educational materials and activities in a basically relaxed and versatile manner
- to respect the individuality of each child
- to stimulate all children in their development
- to work actively at a good co-operation with parents and with the other workers
- to co-operate in a team with representants of different disciplines in order to diagnose, draw up a plan and a strategy for a child and evaluate it all.

The prior training and experience of the workers has not prepared them for this complex task. The greatest difference seems to be that in their previous experience there was no demand to consider explicitly what one was doing and why.

During prior training, theory and practice were experienced as two completely different things, with practically no relationship between them. In The Netherlands, as in most other countries, the main accent in child-care work until recently was on cleaning (rooms, clothes, noses, etc.) and on feeding, whereas stimulation of development was hardly considered at all. This might have arisen from the fact that neither the workers themselves, nor the society at large believed child-care work to be really important. The sudden increase in play-groups and other centers for children under 4, and the changing attitudes of parents regarding these centers, have shifted the emphasis more to pedagogy. This in turn lead to re-consideration of the goals for preschool education. People in general became convinced of the necessity to approach the work more knowledgeably.

From this summing up of the new and rather complex situation it appears that special training of the workers in a day-care center is very desirable. Below we will attempt to give a brief outline of the training given in Proefkrecht'70.

In selecting the child-care workers we pay more and more attention to aspects of personality and character and less and less to schooling and practice. Nevertheless we have learned that some knowledge of how elaborately children of this age can play, seems to be indispensable for a good start. It should be understood that the different child-care workers in our project also have had different working and personal experiences. Our coaching aims at a constant exchange of these different experiences. This is done because we hope that it will teach the workers to meet problems from different angles, which might also create a more flexible attitude towards new situations and new happenings.

We try to reach this goal by the following means:

- by talking about what impression our "doing and sayings" make on each other, whereby we try to tolerate and respect different opinions, attitudes and values as far as is possible

- by meetings at which one of the child-care workers discusses "her children" with a team consisting of one of the research-assistants, the social worker and the director. These talks last about 3½ hours, in which the individual development of each child in the group is discussed, together with the attitude of the worker regarding the child, and the reactions of each child to her. Eventually a plan and a strategy for working with individual children is developed for the next period. In these discussions the notes of the child-care worker play an important role. Each worker has such a meeting every six weeks
- by weekly meetings between each child-care worker and the director in which more urgent or personal problems are discussed
- by a monthly meeting between all child-care workers, the two social workers and the director, during which the contacts between the workers and the parents are discussed
- by evening-meetings, during which the programme of activities is discussed, aimed at fostering emotional, social, language, cognitive and motor development. As far as possible new activities are developed and tried out together. Also purchase decisions on new play- and developmental materials are made in these group discussions
- by each child-care worker sharing responsibility for "hiring and firing" other child-care workers, with whom they have to work closely. This also applies to the acceptance or rejection of temporary trainees who are working under the daily guidance of the child-care workers
- by child-care workers maintaining contacts with other people or institutions outside the center and appearing as representatives of the center, e.g. at training courses.

As well as co-operation between child-care workers, co-operation with the other workers in the project is important. Below we give some examples of difficulties that have been encountered.

In the early period of the project the child-care workers had high expectations of the team-members with an academic background. Concrete and direct answers in practical matters were expected as well as definite ideas on goals and means of the working with the children and parents.

Evidently the academicians were unable to meet these expectations and the child-care workers gradually had to change their view on what could reasonably be expected. On the other hand advice and suggestions regarding practical matters given by the academic workers, were sometimes coolly received. Hence, mutual aggressiveness and distrust occasionally arose. This was also aggravated by the fact that only the child-care workers were permanently in the position of being exposed to observation via one-way screens. This led to feelings of stress and insecurity which were insufficiently recognized by the other (observing) members of the team.

Since most personal contacts between parents and center are maintained by the social worker, there is a constant overlap between the many contacts the child-care workers have with the parents, and those of the social worker. Both parties had to learn to reach concordant attitudes regarding the way specific problems in the contacts with specific parents had to be handled. A constant and continuous communication appears necessary between the center and parents.

The fact that in our center the director is also responsible for the coaching of the child-care workers has initially caused other difficulties with the child-care workers; feelings of reserve and even mistrust have arisen. On the side of the director there were initial difficulties in combining the coaching role with the requirement of guidance and leadership.

Although we now appear to have successfully integrated all these different roles and relationships, we are still careful never to neglect the factors which might cause tensions, annoyances and insecurities.

4. THE CHILDREN

4.1 Daily activities

The top priority for the project must be to ensure that the center always is a place where the children are happy and where they are eager to attend. As with the comments made in section 3, this may appear self evident but certainly the realization of such a goal, for an institution this young, is not easy. Nevertheless the workers and the parents have the impression that this goal is reached most of the days with the vast majority of the children.

Although there is no rigid plan for the day which must be followed, there are some anchor points which structure it. After arrival the children play freely until 9.45 or 10.00 hours. Up to this time they can do what they like (climbing, riding in cars, building, playing with dolls, puzzles, water etc.). The child-care worker just watches, or helps if necessary, and gives some extra attention to any child that needs it.

The rooms are then cleaned up a bit and preparations are made for "juice-time". Juice-time in our center has evolved into a rather elaborate ceremony during which songs are sung and rhymes, riddles and stories are told. The juice and biscuits are on the table, the group sits around the table, and sometimes it may be 20 minutes before drinking and eating starts.

After juice-time, directed group activities are available such as games for motor, musical, conceptual and perceptual development and other creative activities are organized such as clay work, painting, cutting and pasting. In our center we have developed non-structured programmes for all of these activities, some of which are based on several external sources. There is no explicit philosophy behind these activities. The main criterion for keeping an activity in the "repertoire" is the pleasure arising for the children and the child-care workers.

Typical of our approach is the fact that these activities are carried out in small groups; that we have also developed a repertoire for children aged 2 years;

that an equilibrium has been developed between systematically following a structured plan, while at the same time allowing for totally new inventions which may come up spontaneously every day. After these activities, which may last from 15 to 30 minutes, children are again free to play with anything they want to for about half an hour. This may be inside or outside, depending on the weather. Lunch is served at about noon, after which the morning-children leave the center. Of the day-children most go to bed until 14.30. The others play inside or outside or go for a walk. After the childrens' rest it is juice-time again, after which there is another period of structured activities, lasting about 30 minutes. Then a period of free play begins until the children are called for by their parents. Sometimes the children go to the zoo, a museum or a park, but there is no day which lacks alternation between structured and unstructured activities. We are engaged in describing the repertoire completely, in written text and on 16 mm. color film.

4.2 Special Attention to Individual Children

Although the child-care workers in our center work with small groups and although they always encourage individual participation, we have found that some children (about 15% of our population) do not seem to profit from this enough for their emotional development. So we have selected them for special attention in individual sessions, held by a student of pedagogy. These sessions, which last about 20 minutes, are held in a separate room which has a large dolls' house in it. The form of interaction can be compared with play therapy on a nondirective (Rogerian) base. Since we do not want to use the overloaded word "therapy" we talk about "individual attention". During this "individual attention" we strive towards frequent contacts with the parents of these children. In these talks we try to form a common viewpoint on the problem behavior of the child and to agree on a co-ordinated strategy for dealing with this problem, both in the center and at home.

5. THE PARENTS

We aim to make the center a place where the parents feel welcome. We believe that the center contributes to the favorable development of the children both at the center and in their homes.

Similarly there is considerable benefit to both center and parents in a free exchange of views concerning the children. We try to develop a situation where the parents themselves help each other by discussing various matters of common interest. This in turn ensures further benefit for the child through, say a more relaxed homelife atmosphere.

At first we tried to create this situation by the traditional means of evening meetings for parents and workers, as is normal in the Dutch educational system. In fact, we have had many successful evenings but also there have been unsuccessful ones (low attendance rate, cool atmosphere, too little participation, dominating workers, dominating parents, etc.). We have more recently developed new forms of meetings which seem to be far more effective in helping to establish a good contact between parents and center, and between parents and parents.

After bringing their children to the center many parents remain for some time in the rooms and talk with each other and the child-care worker. Very often they help their child to start with some game or activity. Mostly after some 10 minutes when the child is concentrating on its play, the parent leaves or starts talking with another parent or the worker.

Fairly early in the development of our day care center doubts arose about the usefulness of this general situation of playing children, talking parents and very busy child-care workers, who had to divide their attention between both the children and the parents.

However, since many of the parents (mostly mothers) seemed really to appreciate the possibility of talking with each other, and since we wanted to stimulate this possibility, but did not want to lay an extra burden on the child-care workers, we took the only spare room for extra activities we had and reshaped it into a comfortable meeting-place for parents.

At the same time the room was given an official function as toy-library where toys are displayed and can be borrowed. Also books and journals, occasionally on pedagogic subjects can be borrowed. The "library" started in January 1975 and has been very successful. Its success may have been due to the fact that first, one of our social workers is always present and acts as a hostess, as a source of information, as a conflict-regulator, etc. and that second there is a permanent supply of coffee.

So now, many of the mothers, after having brought their children to the play-rooms and having stayed there for varying times, come down to the "library" (we use the less formal work "uitlenerij", which perhaps can be best translated as "lending-place") and participate in the group discussions for one or more mornings in the week. The social worker keeps a diary of these mornings, so we know how many parents came on how many days, and we also have a list of subjects discussed in the group. The extent to which mothers and fathers participate ranges from once a month up to 4 times a week. Probably the success of our "uitlenerij" is helped a great deal by the fact that most of our mothers, as is typical for the Dutch society, do not work or only have a part-time occupation.

Apart from the social worker for group activities, the center has one part-time social worker for individual contacts with the parents. She also carries out regular parent interviews to discuss the development of the children with the parents etc.

More recently we extended this last aspect.

Once a year the concerning child-care worker, together with one of the social workers or the director, has a meeting with both parents in which they discuss, as extensive as possible, the development of the child in the last period. We find that this is a very effective way to establish a good mutual relation which is to the advantage of all people involved and in particular the child.

The social workers co-operate with the parents in:

- selecting an appropriate kindergarten for the children when they have passed their fourth birthday
- editing and producing the center-bulletin
- suggesting joint external activities for the parents with their children
- providing information on where to buy good and cheap clothes etc.

They also initiate other actions for the benefit of the parents, for example:

- ensuring that parents are well informed on the aims and methods of the work in the center, and on changes in staff
- helping parents to find information on matters of general interest, such as possibilities for further education, goals of certain action groups, political issues etc.

6. PROJECT LIMITATIONS

Due to experimental losses and various other factors we now expect to end the project with about 48 children from lower socio-economic classes, who have participated in the project for 1 to 3 years. The number of children whose parents had at least 12 years of formal schooling (college level) is expected to be 18. The comparison group for the lower class children will be about twice as large, namely 80 to 90 children. Apart from the relatively small number of children participating in the project, there are six further major limitations to the possibility of confidently assessing the influence of our day care center on the children:

I. Children could not be assigned to experimental and control conditions in a random manner

This is characteristic of the vast majority of studies in the same field. Although we have tried to form a "control group" of similar age and background, the fact that this group consists of children whose parents do not ask for a place in a day care center, also implies that the two groups of parents differ in many other aspects, some of which are unknown.

Furthermore, we had no "pool" from which to select project children, since few parents from lower socio-economic classes in The Netherlands make use of day care facilities. In fact, given the strict criteria for admission to the project (neither parent more than 7 or 8 years of formal schooling etc.) we had trouble in finding enough children to fill the "experimental" groups.

This means that nearly all the selection is made by the parents themselves, which makes it impossible to generalize about children of parents from lower socio-economic classes in Amsterdam.

This difficulty implies that we shall be limited in interpreting results that indicate differences between groups.

Currently a model for statistical evaluation is being developed including an analysis of co-variance in which the entrance test scores will be used as the co-variables.

All analyses will take place in 1975.

II. Measurement of effects is limited by the instruments and the evaluation budget

In section 2.3 we have summarized the tests used for general and language development. Measurement of possible effects is limited by the sensitivity of these instruments. If our evaluation budget were larger, we could have attempted to develop and apply sophisticated methods for observing social and emotional behavior, for example, in day care center situations. But, since it would take considerable time to develop, test and apply these methods, we have had to abandon this idea. We are experimenting with a collection of statements on the social and emotional aspects of the behavior of the children (to be divided into Q-sorts by parents and some members of the staff) to obtain a measurement of opinions on the behavior of the children.

However for various reasons it will be impossible to obtain these opinions about the children from the comparison group. We are interviewing the teachers from the kindergarten classes on the social, emotional and cognitive aspects of the behavior of children from the "experimental" and comparison groups. However, since the reliability and validity of such methods may be seriously questioned, we shall not place much weight on the outcome of these interviews.

III. Our knowledge about the meaning of the test scores on the tests used is limited

The tests used for children under 5 have not yet been standardized in The Netherlands, which implies that there are no national norms and that the information about the reliability of the instruments is limited to the data collected at our own project.

Of the tests mentioned in section 2.3 only the AKIT general intelligence test has been standardized on a national sample. The reliability and stability of the test is good.

The UTANT test for language development consists of an adaptation of three sub-tests from the ITPA and a vocabulary sub-test derived from Thurstone's PMA 5-7. The test was standardized provisionally on a sample of 800 schoolchildren from Utrecht aged 4 - 7.

Reliability and stability of the test are reasonable.

For the Bayley, the Stutsman Merrill-Palmer and the Stanford-Binet, the only references we have are the published data on the North American standardization samples. Considering cross-cultural differences, it is obvious that tests may change considerably when translated and used in other cultures.

Besides it is doubtful whether these tests still meet current psychometric standards. This applies specifically to the Stutsman and the Stanford-Binet. To mention only two of the short-comings, even in the United States no one knows whether 100 is still the mean of the population, while sub-norms for groups with different occupational status are totally unknown.

So we are more or less dependent on the data collected in our own project. For example, we have obtained the following stability-coefficients for the Stutsman-test.

period between the two testings	number of children	co-efficient of correlation
3 - 5 months	11	0.78
6 - 8 months	29	0.76
9 - 12 months	29	0.70

The coefficients of correlation mentioned above were based on children with rather a large age range, but a restricted age group, taking the first test between the age of 35 and 40 months, yielded a correlation of about 0.75 both after 3 - 5 months and after 6 - 8 months.

The stability-coefficients obtained seem to indicate that the immediate test/re-test reliability of the Stutsman for Dutch children (according to our translation and our way of testing) will almost certainly be over 0.80, which seems acceptable for such an early and unstable age. From the data collected in our project we hope to derive valid developmental regression-coefficients, means and standard deviations for the kind of Dutch children studied in our project.

IV. Different tests were used for different age groups

Since any test we chose can only be used for children from a limited age group, we had to shift to different instruments in order to cover the whole age range from 1 - 6 years. Obviously, this is an enormous set-back for the interpretation of the scores obtained. Although little is known about the tests themselves even less is known about the relationship between the tests. Therefore, we are considering comparing the scores on one test with the scores on the next in ordinal scale values only.

V. There is no possibility for a random assignment of children or child-care workers to different conditions of treatment within the project

One of the consequences of a project such as ours, in which the people responsible for the daily care of the children make up a cohesive team, is that the researcher loses his superior and detached position as an organizer of situations in which the practical worker is more or less forced to operate. Another consequence is that experimental changes in treatment or environment can only be made with the whole-hearted consent of the practical workers.

From the pedagogical and emotional viewpoint of the child-care workers a random assignment for treatment of a child that has participated in the center is not feasible.

VI. There is no possibility of comparing our data with those from similar projects in The Netherlands or in Europe

Since we know of no other projects in The Netherlands, or even in Europe, with the same goals, the same kind of children and the same kind of instruments for evaluation purposes, we cannot compare our data with those of other projects.

A comparison with data obtained in North American projects will always be doubtful because of the differences between the children and their home surroundings as well as general cultural differences. However, this does not imply that we will not try to compare our data with those from North American projects operating on a similar basis and with similar instruments.

After this discussion on the negative aspects to our research a few positive words seem appropriate.

- a. This is the first project in the Netherlands (and as far as we know for that matter in any other European country) which is collecting so much psychometric data about such young children. The total data will form a foundation for further research.
- b. Although we will not be absolutely certain in interpreting the collected scores, it will be possible to say something. Since we know the pre-test position of the children on two instruments it will be possible to draw conclusions about their post-test positions on other instruments, be it in ordinal terms only.
- c. For one of the post-test instruments (AKIT) national norms are available. Norms for a reasonably large comparison group are available for one other (UTANT). In both cases comparisons will make sense, although one has to be aware of the effect of "test-wiseness" of our project-children on the data (see e. below).

- d. The Stanford-Binet scores will allow us to make tentative but sensible comparisons with data collected in other, mainly North American pre-school evaluation projects.
- e. Given the difficult circumstances, the energy spent in conducting our research as scientifically as possible compares favorably with the nonchalance observed in some other projects.
One example is the special effort we have made to give all the children from the comparison group the same testing experience as our day care-children. Thus, both sets of scores should be equally inflated as to test-wiseness.

7. PARTICIPATION IN ADVISORY WORK CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DUTCH SYSTEM FOR PRESCHOOL PROVISIONS

The staff of the experimental day care center has played an important role in several committees set up to report on different aspects of Dutch preschool provisions.

Below we mention the two most important ones:

1. On the request of the Secretary of State for Education a committee was formed to advise on the desirability to lower the kindergarten entrance-age in Holland. As we have mentioned above nearly all Dutch children go to kindergarten from their fourth birthday on and the question is now if younger children also should be allowed to go to these kindergartens.

The advisory group came to the conclusion that this would not be a very sensible thing to do. Rather, the group would like to see an extension of the playgroup and day care provisions for children below four, and an amelioration of the quality of these provisions. The classes of the existing kindergartens were considered too large for 3 year old children and the teachers were considered inadequately trained for this particular age-group. Rather than let the 3-year olds try to adapt to the provisions set up for 4- and 5-year old children, the group advised to put more money in a system specifically meant for children of 2 and 3.

The arguments partly are the same as those used in Great Britain in the controversy between the playgroup movement and the regular infant schoolsystem. These arguments also involve the question which system is better for promoting strong relations with the parents of the children.

In Holland as well as in Great Britain the chances for parent participation were thought to be better in the playgroup and day care area than in the kindergarten or infant-school system. As yet (Juni 1974) it is uncertain whether the Dutch government will take any action in accordance with or contrary to the advice given in this report.

2. On the request of a body co-ordinating the efforts to develop a better system for training those who are working in or who want to work in playgroups and day care centers, an advisory committee was formed which brought out a report in May 1974. The staff of our day care center was deeply involved in formulating the goals for such a new form of teacher-training, both on a general level and in the behavioral details. The report deals with all the aspects of the work in playgroups and day care centers and puts emphasis on the role the day care worker plays in the educational system at large. In the report the intricate social and emotional complexities of the job, in dealing with children, parents and co-workers, are illustrated with examples from daily practice. Also an extensive but not unrealistic list of behaviors is given which are thought to be instrumental for fostering development in the children being cared for. It is hoped that this report will be followed by action to create a system for training the day-care and playgroup workers of the future. It is also hoped that this report will be translated into other languages.